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FinalHouse Of Representatives Closed Session Re Nicaragua, 23 May 1984

I would add only a few words on the current state of play in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Its clear that the Salvadoran guerrillas are preparing a major expansion of forces and a fall offensive against the Duarte government, with heavy Cuban and Nicaraguan support. The presence or absence of the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance will be a key element in whether the Nicaraguan supported offensive in El Salvador is a success or a failure. The Nicaraguan Resistance is making daily progress deep inside the country because it is receiving the massive support of the rural population. The Resistance forces are tying down major elements of the Sandinista military establishment, and are causing a major diversion of Sandinista military supplies which might otherwise be applied to the support of subversion in El Salvador or elsewhere in Central America.

It will not be surprising if this fall we see lots of trained Nicaraguan soldiers no longer needed to defend against the resistance turning up as Salvadoran guerrillas. Most of whatever we do to help El Salvador can be cancelled out if the Nicaraguan resistance is unable to continue.

Certainly a cutoff would boost the morale of the Salvadoran guerrillas while contributing enormously to the buildup for a fall offensive which Cuba and the Soviet Union already have under way. It would give the Sandinistas a green light to clamp down its totalitarian

SECRET

SECRET

control over the people of Nicaragua, to expand throughout the country the Cuban method of people control by vigilantes, block by block, which has stilled the voice of the Cuban people and has already been imposed in Managua and other cities of Nicaragua. It would snuff out the hope for a democratic alternative to which Nicaraguans still aspire and which the resistance keeps alive for them. It would increase the fears in the area about Nicaragua's aggressive policies and its purpose in acquiring tanks, training their pilots to fly Soviet MIGs and arming 100,000 men, more than all the other countries of Central America put together. It would reinforce the view all over Latin America that the US is an unreliable partner.

This time, a pullout could not be attributed to military failure. The people we would be letting down have achieved an amazing success in establishing in two years a strong and secure opposition in a militarized totalitarian state. What we have done to help them has been strictly with the directives of the national policy apparatus and the authorization and funding provided by the Congress. This time if we pull out, we would be telling the world we no longer find it politically acceptable to stand by our own commitments.

These people resisting in Nicaragua tell, each in his or her own way, that they will not give up their fight for a free and just homeland. They are not interested in politics, but they want the right to choose their leaders by vote. They will tell you they do not want men with guns and power to intimidate their clergy, to run their schools, to insult the

SECRET

Holy Father, they want to live in peace. But most of all, they will proudly tell you they will win this struggle for freedom and justice because God and America are on their side.

There is a fateful vote to be cast -- a vote perhaps more than any other that will stick to our reputations as individuals and as a nation and an ally. In whatever we do, we will be speaking to people who have put their lives on the line, to other nations of Central America struggling for their freedom, to other free nations around the world, to the Soviet Union, Cuba, Libya, Iran and other aggressor nations, to the American people and their commitment to liberty. We will be speaking to history and to our future.

Within a year the national security and geopolitical position of the United States can be permanently impaired, as General Vessey spelled out, by a hostile base on the American mainland a little more than an hour's flight away. How will the historical record look? What were we doing while the Soviet Union was committing over \$4 billion a year in military and economic assistance to and through Cuba and positioning some 6,000 Soviet troops and advisors in Cuba, while some 3,500 Cuban military advisors and hundreds of Soviet bloc advisors worked to clamp totalitarianism on Nicaragua and its neighbors. We, the United States, tried to counter this threat to our security with less than half a billion dollars in economic and military assistance and a mere handful of military advisors.

Let me now focus for a final moment on the practicalities of the situation we find ourselves in. It would be hard for anyone to contend that the Nicaraguan resistance is not an asset in the fight against

SECRET

Communist domination of Central America. No one can be happy about letting it disappear for nothing. As long as those resistants are there on the ground they exert pressure on the Sandinistas, they divert them from mischief elsewhere, they reresent hope and provide encouragement to their fellow countrymen, they can nourish pluralism and democracy in Nicaragua, they constitute a reason for the Sandinistas to improve their behavior. Many of you believe they have gone too far, that they should not do things that threaten third country interests. It should not be beyond our ingenuity to keep them able to protect themselves and exert pressure on the ground in their own country to let them exert their political will along with others in that country to evolve the kind of government that is right for all Nicaraguans.

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